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**THEMATIC AND NARRATIVE CONNECTION THROUGH WEST COAST SLANG  
IN TUPAC SHAKUR’S *ALL EYEZ ON ME* ALBUM**

Bachelor’s thesis

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## PREFACE

Tupac Amaru Shakur, also known as 2Pac, is an influential figure in the hip-hop music genre. Tupac is considered as one of history's most popular artists, having sold over 75 million records worldwide (Light, 2017). His studio album *All Eyez on Me* achieved diamond certification and exceeded 10 million sales, ranking it among the best-selling albums of all time (Light, 2017). His debut album *2Pacalypse Now* brought up topics like police brutality and caused condemnation from Vice President of the United States Dan Quayle (Perković, 2022). Tupac used West Coast slang as a narrative tool and wrote lyrics that described the struggles of urban life in 1990s California. Sociolinguistics scholars Alim and Smitherman (2012) view slang as a reflection of marginalized communities' experiences. Correspondingly, scholars Morgan and Bennett (2011) point out the role of slang as a reflection of collective identity, emphasizing how hip-hop serves as a platform for articulating personal and social struggles. However, there is a research gap in understanding how Tupac Shakur used West Coast slang, specifically from California, to communicate his experiences and connect them to broader social issues prevalent in the 1990s West Coast. These issues continue to be relevant with hip-hop's constant role as a platform for advocacy. The aims are to conduct a qualitative analysis of Tupac's use of slang within his studio album *All Eyez on Me*, examining how his linguistic style conveys personal narratives and connects with the socio-political landscape of the time. By analyzing his lyrics alongside media reports and academic insights into the social climate of the 1990s, this study seeks to reveal how Tupac's language reflects his individual struggles while resonating with larger societal issues such as gang violence, racial tensions, and economic disparity in the 1990s West Coast.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two main chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction provides an overview of existing knowledge on the role of slang in Hip-Hop's cultural identity, the West Coast of the United States and Tupac Shakur. Chapter I "Contextual Establishment of West Coast Slang and Tupac's Narrative" explores the historical evolution of West Coast slang in hip-hop and outlines the criteria for analyzing Tupac's lyrics. Chapter II "Thematic and Narrative Analysis of *All Eyez on Me*" provides the practical analysis of Tupac's lyrics from his album *All Eyez on Me*. It describes the methodology that is used to categorize slang, examines the thematic topics and provides the qualitative analysis on selected lyrics. The conclusion summarizes the key findings of Tupac's linguistic choices and the potential for understanding hip-hop as a cultural and social movement by examining slang.

<b>PREFACE .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Contents</i>	
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Musical Identity and Message in West Coast Hip-Hop Music.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Role of Slang in Hip-Hop Music and Its Socio-Linguistic Significance.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Tupac Shakur’s Socio-Political Upbringing and Use of Slang in His Music .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CHAPTER I CONTEXTUAL ESTABLISHMENT OF WEST COAST SLANG AND TUPAC’S NARRATIVE.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.1. Socio-Political Landscape of 1990s California.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.2. Tupac Shakur’s History .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 THEMATIC AND NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF <i>ALL EYEZ ON ME</i> .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.1. Methodology and Selection Criteria .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.2. Analysis of Tracks.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.3. Establishment of Findings and Narrative Themes .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>31</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### **Musical Identity and Message in West Coast Hip-Hop Music**

Music is integral to rituals, ceremonies, politics, social control, and other various aspects of human life (Herndon & McLeod, 1982). Jeff Chang's (2005) *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* narrates the evolution of hip-hop as a global cultural movement that is rooted in the social and political realities of America. Hip-hop began as a pastime activity for young people in African-American communities, but growing up in neglected areas, these young people's creativity unintentionally sparked a wider cultural change (Chang, 2005). Culture can be defined as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871, p. 1). In hip-hop culture, language unites the different voices and experiences of the people who create it. Over the past three decades, hip-hop culture has expanded to represent urban, rural, suburban and global groups of people, spanning across all ages, genres, religions, economic classes and races (Dumitru & Tudor, 2022). It is a cultural phenomenon that speaks to the soul of communities and gives them a sense of identity. This genre of music became an important tool for artists to express narratives of resilience amidst adversity, addressing issues ranging from economic disparities to racial discrimination (Herndon & McLeod, 1982).

West Coast hip-hop borrows a variety of music influences and specific themes that stem from its beginnings. Garn (2023) discusses the genre's unique blend of G-funk beats with intense gangsta rap stories that focus on societal struggles. The term "gangsta" is a slang that is derived from the word "gangster" and is rooted in African American Vernacular English (AAVE). It is a phonetic spelling of "gangster" with the final "r" being dropped (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Gangsta rap, as explained by Adaso (2019), is a subgenre of hip-hop that portrays the harsh realities of urban life. It covers topics of street violence, drug abuse, gang activity, materialism and misogyny (Adaso, 2019). G-funk is defined as "gangsta rap music that is influenced by 1970s funk" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Brian and Megan (2023) emphasize the genre's evolution from its disco and funk origins to the more raw and explicit themes of gangsta rap. Correspondingly, Gregory (2022) mentions anti-law enforcement perspectives of West Coast hip-hop and highlights the mellow tones. Jeff (2023) similarly notes the shift from party-focused music to explicit themes that show diverse social landscape. It was a time of creative intensity and cultural shift when the genre not only mirrored society but actively confronted it (Garn, 2023). Overall, the hip-hop genre's anti-establishment stance and laid-back nature

provided a canvas for artists such as Tupac Shakur to convey narratives of adversity and resistance (Gregory, 2022).

West Coast hip-hop identity is closely tied to the local landscapes and experiences of its artists. The rise of gang culture in late 1970s Los Angeles happened due to the lack of opportunities for formal employment, including entry-level service sector jobs, which led young Black men to form groups to defend territory, protect themselves and their neighborhoods from outsiders (Hinton, 2021). In addition, gang culture allowed for aggressive and violent lyrical style, known as gangsta rap, which gained mainstream attention due to observation from local and federal authorities (Johnson, 2011). During the late 1980s, West Coast hip-hop culture prospered within California's African American and Latino communities; Oakland, South Central Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Compton became crucial areas for the rise of West Coast hip-hop (Burnim & Maultsby, 2015). Compton has influenced the music of worldwide acts like N.W.A and Kendrick Lamar, and is closely associated with gangsta rap. ("From Compton to Oakland" 2023). The city became known as a symbol of urban decay (Chang, 2005). It provided a space for artists to make a commentary on social conditions and a groundbreaking way to profit in the music industry (Chang, 2005). Poverty, violence, and racial tensions in Compton created harsh conditions that formed the foundation of the music. ("From Compton to Oakland" 2023). In contrast, Oakland's vibrant cultural scene fostered a unique fusion of funk, soul, and rap, creating a distinct Bay Area sound ("From Compton to Oakland" 2023). Oakland artist Too Short demonstrated the Bay Area's hustle mentality by selling approximately 50,000 copies of his album *Born to Mack* straight from the trunk of his car (Larkin, 2006), while E-40 built on this legacy by setting himself apart with slang and layered wordplay (Cruz, Downing, & Weintraub, 2023). These are the areas that shaped the unique sound and lyricism of West Coast hip-hop through their distinct slang, accent, and tempo.

To summarize, hip-hop's identity can be considered as a reflection of the social and political realities of the marginalized communities that unite to convey a message of resistance and self-expression (Herndon & McLeod, 1982; Chang, 2005). It is characterized by gangsta rap music and influences from funk music (Garn, 2023; Gregory, 2022). Artists from different areas of West Coast offer a creative expression of their local communities. Fostering internationally recognized musicians, West Coast hip-hop has established its prominence through distinctive message and sound.

## **The Role of Slang in Hip-Hop Music and Its Socio-Linguistic Significance**

Particularly in the hip-hop music genre, slang is important in shaping language and culture. According to Nwokoji (2024), slang is frequently used in speech rather than strict writing; it is considered as an informal vocabulary and it can function as a unique language within certain groups to establish personal identity and exclude outsiders. Koupun, Lumoindong & Sanger (2024) reinforce this idea and put emphasis on the usage of slang in casual communication within specific communities to create a sense of closeness and support. Connection between language and culture is crucial to sociolinguistic studies.

Sociolinguistics examine how language functions as a tool for communication within various social contexts, linking linguistic use to societal dynamics (Holmes, 2013). It is a branch of linguistics that focuses on how social contexts form and influence language use (Nwokoji, 2024). Wardhaugh (1986) similarly notes that social systems form language and that their connection cannot be separated. It is evident in the use of slang in hip-hop music, which fosters social identity and cultural narratives.

The root for West Coast slang is African American Vernacular English (AAVE). AAVE is “a term used typically in sociolinguistics to refer to a dialect of English spoken by many African Americans in the USA” (McArthur, Lam-McArthur & Fontaine, 2022). Geneva Smitherman (1986) writes in the book *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* that AAVE can function as a linguistic tool for marginalized communities to convey their experiences and to challenge prevailing narratives. Many Black Americans face discrimination based on their way of speaking; this leads to many AAVE speakers adjusting their language through the practice of switching between different language varieties or communication styles depending on the social context (Zang, 2020). AAVE, including regional variations like West Coast street slang, serves as a form of resistance (Smitherman, 1986). It defies societal expectations to adhere to mainstream language standards and reinforces the identity and unity of Black communities.

In conclusion, within the context of hip-hop music, slang forms cultural identity and provides an opportunity to express social narratives (Holmes, 2013; Smitherman, 1986). Sociolinguistic studies show that language and its regional varieties function as a link between individuality and social interactions, as West Coast slang is used in both personal expression and collective cultural movements (Nwokoji, 2024; Koupun, Lumoindong & Sanger, 2024). Rooted in African American Vernacular English, West Coast slang confronts prevailing cultural norms (McArthur, Lam-McArthur & Fontaine, 2022; Smitherman, 1986). Through the use of slang,

hip-hop artists create a unique linguistic system that fosters belonging and resistance (Smitherman, 1986; Zang, 2020).

### **Tupac Shakur's Socio-Political Upbringing and Use of Slang in His Music**

Jeff Chang (2005) puts emphasis on the impact of hip-hop music during the period of 1980s and 1990s. Artists, including Tupac Shakur, appeared as influential voices and were addressing issues of systemic racism, economic inequality, and police brutality (Jeff Chang, 2005). Tupac is regarded as an influential West Coast artist, but that was not always the case. Initially, Tupac was proud of his East Coast origin and adopted the rap name "MC New York" after he relocated to California in 1988 to show loyalty (Gregory, 2022). The rap name was a tribute to his roots in New York City. It expressed Tupac's connection to the East Coast hip-hop scene, where he started his artistic endeavors. However, his severed friendship with close friends and the prominent East Coast rapper Notorious B.I.G. left him feeling betrayed; Tupac began to represent the West Coast and California (Gregory, 2022).

Tupac's shift to West Coast themes of social change and empowerment was also influenced by his family background. He was raised with the principles of the Black nationalist organization that was established in Oakland by the name Black Panther Party (Kaur & McMillan, 2023). The Black Panther Party had gained prominence in the late 1960s as a response to the ongoing efforts of American institutions, including government entities, to oppress Black Americans, who no longer wanted to be treated like strangers in their own country (Tillotson, 2017). They considered anti-poverty programs to be inadequate in bringing significant change to the lives of Black Americans and viewed the police as an oppressive force of systemic violence (Kamish, 2021). His mother's Black Panther activism greatly influenced Tupac's life and music (Kaur & McMillan, 2023). Tupac put his personal experiences in the context of the street life (Edwards & Ash, 2004). Assata Shakur (1987), godmother of Tupac, states that she had close friends in the Black Panther Party that would visit her home; they would have long discussions on topics like politics, the Party and North Korea. She says that these discussions provided her with more knowledge in one evening than she had gained in a month at City College (Shakur, 1987). The Black Panther Party's mission soon expanded in order to confront socioeconomic issues such as hunger, poor living conditions and lack of proper medical care that persisted (Kamish, 2021). The political ideologies of the Black Panther Party established Tupac's worldview and influenced his unique style. He expressed the concept of "realness" through cultural and linguistic representation (Edwards & Ash, 2004).

Tupac consistently showed his AAVE proficiency in lyrics that portrayed thug life, which embodies a defiance of mainstream authority (Edwards & Ash, 2004). Despite the dominant perspective that labeled "thugs" as menaces to society, Tupac respected and admired them, as many of his mentors, father figures, and sources of support were considered "thugs" (MTV News, 2019). Chang (2005) states that an important element to Tupac's lyrical identity was his adept use of West Coast street slang. It provided authenticity to his narratives and strengthened his alignment with the West Coast hip-hop community, especially after his severed relationships with East Coast artists.

In summary, the use of slang in music not only reflects personal experiences but also serves as a tool for expressing broader socio-political struggles. Hip-hop music has a strong identity where artists offer unique creative expressions. The expressions are rooted in their local communities with their distinct styles. This genre continues to grow popular and remains as a form of cultural advocacy and political activism. In addition, Herndon and McLeod (1982) explain that understanding the roles and relationships of musicians with their audiences is foundational for ethnomusicologists, who investigate perceptions and learning processes regarding music that include cognition, cultural myths, and instructional strategies. Considering the complex, underexplored connection between slang and social advocacy in Tupac's music, it can be hypothesized that his use of West Coast slang in *All Eyez on Me* album functions as an important narrative source that links his personal themes with the socio-political realities of 1990s California.

## **CHAPTER I CONTEXTUAL ESTABLISHMENT OF WEST COAST SLANG AND TUPAC'S NARRATIVE**

Tupac Shakur's album *All Eyez on Me* reflects systemic oppression, racial tensions and economic disparity of 1990s California. This chapter delves deeper into the socio-political and cultural context of that period. Both Tupac and people whose stories resonate through his lyrics lived through these realities. To fully understand the significance of West Coast slang in Tupac's narrative identity, it is crucial to understand and acknowledge the environment that formed this linguistic form of expression. Slang emerged as a response to the challenges faced by these communities and functioned as a form of resistance, solidarity and authenticity. Tupac's life from his ideological upbringing in the Black Panther movement to his embrace of West Coast hip-hop provides a deeper understanding of the themes and linguistic choices that define his artistry. By connecting the socio-political landscape, individual narratives and Tupac's life story, this chapter provides the theoretical groundwork for the analysis of *All Eyez on Me*. It introduces key concepts and questions that will guide the discourse analysis in Chapter II that examines how slang bridges the personal and the collective narratives in Tupac's work.

### **1.1. Socio-Political Landscape of 1990s California**

During the late 20th century, California experienced profound economic challenges that disproportionately affected non-white communities. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of California's real estate market, and the onset of the 1990 recession came together, intensifying the social challenges that had been growing for years (Gerber, 1995). The lack of well-paying jobs for Black residents was made worse by limited access to education, discriminatory hiring practices and underdeveloped economic infrastructure in predominantly African American communities (Solomon, Maxwell, & Castro, 2021). The shift from manufacturing jobs to service-sector employment contributed to a rise in unemployment that has become present particularly among Black youth (Hinton, 2021). California's priorities moved away from education and towards law enforcement and over 400 bills were being passed to enforce harsher penalties (Schrag, 1998). The arrest rate for African Americans by 1992 was 3.6 times higher per 100,000 people than that of white individuals (Lofstrom, Goss, Hayes, & Martin, 2019). Many young Black men were faced with limited opportunities. They joined gangs as a way to find respect, power and a sense of community (Hinton, 2021). This struggle is not new and is deeply rooted in the history of Black migration to California. World War II led to an expansion

of the nation's defense industry, creating a lot of job opportunities for African Americans (National Archives, n.d.). During the 1970s, many African Americans moved to California's major cities with a national migration of 3 million Black people within twenty years (National Archives, n.d.). Historical migration patterns like this reflect the connection of Black communities. Anthony Johnson, 19, was initially attracted to gang life for the benefits it provided, but later left the lifestyle and pursued nursing after being inspired by the care he received in the hospital (San Bernardino County Sun, 1994a, July 17). Tom Scott, 17, a gang member from a middle-class background, joined gangs due to a sense of boredom and hopelessness despite his seemingly stable surroundings (San Bernardino County Sun, 1994b, July 17). Mark Foss, 17, a gang member from a privileged background, was shot and killed by a 15-year-old, which led his grieving parents to express anger over both their son's death and the justice system's lenient sentence of 8 years for the killer (San Bernardino County Sun, 1994, July 19). As illustrated by the stories of teenage boys in San Bernardino County, California, gang involvement stemmed from a variety of personal motivations and circumstances. During the 1990s, statistics indicated that gangs played a significant role in urban crime, being involved in a substantial portion of homicide cases and roughly 40% of illegal drug sales (Tikkanen, 2016). The Crips and Bloods gang activities throughout the 1990s marked a period of gang violence that would largely impact Los Angeles (Hoover, 1999). By 1992, almost 47% of African American men between the ages of 21 and 24 in Los Angeles County were reported as gang members, highlighting the high level of gang affiliation among Black youth during that era (Murch, 2015). Economic difficulties in California were exacerbated by demographic changes with an increase in Latino and Asian American immigration intensifying job competition and fueling racial tensions, especially with the passage of Proposition 187, which targeted undocumented immigrants and sparked further discord among different ethnic groups (Yamazoto, 2003).

Racial tensions were particularly present in cities like Los Angeles, Compton, and Oakland. The 1992 Los Angeles riots exposed deep-seated grievances within the ethnic groups. George Holliday's grainy footage of Rodney King's beating, shot on March 3, 1991, was the first videotaped police violence to go viral, exposing misconduct and launching an era in which citizens wielded new power to reveal excessive force (Schuppe, 2016). Holliday, a resident of a nearby apartment, captured a 79-second video showing King resisting the officers, who then proceeded to strike him with batons and kick him approximately 30 times (Parrish, n.d.). King, a construction worker who was intoxicated and on parole, had previously led the police on a

high-speed chase in his white Hyundai (Schuppe, 2016). Fearing that his arrest for being under the influence would result in a parole violation, King left the freeway and tried to evade his pursuers by speeding through residential areas, with LAPD patrol cars and a police helicopter soon joining the pursuit (Parrish, n.d.). After the video of King's beating first aired, LAPD Chief Daryl Gates made a joke at a public forum, saying, "If it wasn't for our helicopters, the lighting would've been horrible" (Mock, 2017). The four officers involved in the incident were indicted, but in April 1992, the jury acquitted three of them and could not reach a verdict on the fourth (Schuppe, 2016). Rodney King's bodyguard, Tom Owens, recalled that King remained "absolutely motionless" as he watched the verdicts being read on television, while a visibly upset Mayor Tom Bradley stated, "Today, the jury told the world that what we all saw with our own eyes was not a crime" (Linder, 2001). The Rodney King riots started soon after, as African Americans and Latinos showed their anger towards the police, white pedestrians and drivers, and Korean American business owners. (Parrish, n.d.). Tensions had been rising between African American residents and Korean shopkeepers, especially after the 1991 shooting of 15-year-old Latasha Harlins by a Korean storeowner. This incident fueled resentment and played a role in the riots (Mock, 2017). As the violence spread, many Korean American business owners took up arms to protect their stores when law enforcement was unavailable. Chang Lee, a shop owner in Koreatown, shared his experience of guarding his parents' strip mall from a rooftop with a gun, even though he had never used one before (Lah, 2017). In another case, despite being armed, Jay Rhee and other employees at a mini-mall on Santa Monica and Vermont found themselves overwhelmed in a relentless battle with hundreds of looters, who surged into the parking lot, retreated when police arrived, and returned as soon as the police left (Dunn, 1992). Andy Yoo, a young boy at the time, found himself confused as he watched grown men, including his father, armed and guarding businesses in Koreatown, a sight that made him equate the chaos to war (Lah, 2017). 12-year-old James An, fearing for his mother's safety due to her Korean features and new BMW, watched his father leave to defend their family's restaurant (Park & Campa, 2022). This sense of betrayal by the police and the larger American system sparked a political awakening among many young Korean-Americans, who saw their families' struggles as part of a broader fight against marginalization (Bates, 2012). More than 1,700 businesses were destroyed in Koreatown alone (Mock, 2017). The memory of the riots, particularly the sense of abandonment by law enforcement and the violent targeting of their businesses, remains a scar in the Korean-American community, influencing their continued fight for political visibility and power (Wong, 2024). However, the aftermath also led to efforts aimed at bridging divides, such as the formation of organizations like the

Korean American Coalition, which worked to ease tensions between the Korean and African-American communities in the years that followed (Bates, 2012). Edward Chang, a professor of Asian-American studies at the University of California notes that Korean immigrants came to America unaware of its racial history with many assuming that it was a predominantly white country (Bates, 2012). By the time the rioting ceased, fifty-four individuals, primarily Koreans and Latinos, had lost their lives, and hundreds, including sixty firefighters, had sustained injuries (Linder, 2001). These riots highlighted the pervasive police brutality and systemic injustice faced by Black residents (Viator, 2012). The violence that erupted during this period was not merely an expression of anger but a reaction to systematic oppression and neglect by civic authorities (Hinton, 2021). By 1992, gang-related homicides in LA County had reached alarming levels, peaking at 803 deaths, which is an increase of 77% from previous years (Hinton, 2021). While the surge in gang-related violence highlighted the stark challenges facing marginalized communities, it also catalyzed a wave of activism that transformed these hardships into opportunities for political and social progress. The attacks on communities of color led to the formation of networks that turned demographic growth into political power and resulted in significant victories, such as raising the minimum wage, securing immigrant rights like driver's licenses, and reforming harsh criminal justice laws (Moore & Lenoir, 2018). The O.J. Simpson case became a defining moment of the 1990s, as the highly publicized car chase on June 17, 1994, and the subsequent trial highlighted racial tensions in the U.S. Instead of surrendering to the police as planned, Simpson led officers on a notorious low-speed chase through Southern California in his white Ford Bronco, driven by former NFL player Al Cowlings (Ruiz, 2024). The 90-minute chase, broadcasted live, was viewed by 95 million people, underscoring the media's powerful role in shaping public opinion during a period of racial and social turmoil (Shapiro, 2024). The ensuing trial, dubbed the "trial of the century" ended in Simpson's acquittal despite significant evidence, igniting intense discussions about race, the justice system, and law enforcement practices (Shapiro, 2024).

Los Angeles, Compton and Oakland became cultural centers for West Coast hip-hop during this period. Each city contributed to the hip-hop narrative in its own way with local experiences of struggle and resilience. Gangsta rap originated with Philadelphia's Schoolly D's "P.S.K.", but eventually became widely popular in the West Coast, as heavy promotions and record sales formed a divide between East Coast socially conscious rappers and West Coast gangsta rappers (Johnson, 2011). The Los Angeles scene connected with gangsta rap through artists like Ice-T, whose 1986 track "6 in the Mornin'" is cited as one of the foundational songs for the genre

(Miraglia, 2023). Through the release of N.W.A's album *Straight Outta Compton* in 1988, Compton became familiar with gangsta rap (Viator, 2012). Politicians and media connected the rise of gangsta rap to rising crime rates, which resulted in criticism. During the presidential election, Bob Dole and William Bennett publicly condemned gangsta rap, aligning their rhetoric with anti-affirmative action policies and advocating for laws that contributed to the mass incarceration of Black youth (Oosterhoff, 2014). However, it can be argued that this music was not merely glorifying violence but providing insight into the experiences of those within these communities (Farr, 2002). N.W.A directly criticized the Los Angeles Police Department in their lyrics to their 1988 song "Fuck Tha Police" (Mock, 2017). From his 1991 album *Death Certificate*, artist Ice Cube predicted with tracks like "A Bird in the Hand", "Black Korea" and "I Wanna Kill Sam" that a riot in Los Angeles was bound to happen (Mock, 2017).

To summarize, the foundation for the cultural and political resistance that emerged during this period were high unemployment rates and systemic discrimination, which resulted in the rise of gang violence and police brutality (Gerber, 1995; Solomon, Maxwell, & Castro, 2021). Tensions between African Americans and the broader societal structures reached a boiling point and manifested in events like the 1992 Los Angeles riots (Viator, 2012). To listen and tell stories of struggle and resilience, West Coast hip-hop and the genre of gangsta rap provided a platform for marginalized communities (Johnson, 2011; Hoover, 1999).

It is possible to understand the social dynamics at the time with the help of the narratives of individuals who lived through gang violence, encounters with law enforcement, and economic hardship (Hinton, 2021). These personal stories provide many similar themes that can also be found in the lyrics and biography of Tupac Shakur.

## **1.2. Tupac Shakur's History**

Tupac Amaru Shakur was born as Lesane Parish Crooks on June 16, 1971 in Harlem, New York City (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023). He was the son of Afeni Shakur and Billy Garland, two Black Panther activists (Eidell, 2024). His mother renamed him when he was one year old to Tupac Amaru Shakur after the Peruvian revolutionary Túpac Amaru II (Ray, 2025). She later explained that she wanted her son to have the name of a revolutionary figure from the indigenous world to help him understand that he was part of a global culture, not just his local neighborhood (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023). The family of Tupac fought against white supremacy and engaged with various revolutionary organizations. These organizations were the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Black Panther Party, and the

Black Liberation Army (Blain, 2023). His mother was a member of the Black Panther Party, which influenced his worldview (Huntington, 2024). She was active during the late 1960s and early 1970s (The Vogue, n.d.). She was notably part of the “Panther 21” case, in which 21 Black Panther members were falsely accused of plotting bombing against a police department (Davis, 2019). Afeni’s involvement in the Panther 21 trial and her later work as a paralegal for Bronx Legal Services allowed her to assist various activists with legal support (Blain, 2023).

During a time of rising police brutality and the introduction of crack cocaine to Black neighborhoods (Ogbar, 2017), Afeni raised Tupac and his half-sister Sekyiwa on her own, while working as a paralegal before developing a crack addiction in the early 1980s (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023). This addiction resulted in a job loss, after which the family moved from Harlem to Baltimore and eventually to Marin City and Oakland, California (Davis, 2019). Afeni later admitted that as she struggled with addiction, raising Tupac and Sekyiwa without stability was challenging (Eidell, 2024). Tupac’s stepfather was on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list from 1982 (The Vogue, n.d.). In 1984, the family moved to Baltimore, where Tupac transferred from Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School to the Baltimore School for the Arts in his sophomore year (The Vogue, n.d.). He later described this time as the freest moment he had ever felt (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023). During this period he met Jada Pinkett, who would have a lasting influence on his life (Huntington, 2024). He wrote poems for her and she provided a cameo appearance in one of his music videos (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023). Pinkett stated that their close relationship never became romantic (Kimble, 2017). Tupac explained that his journey from writing poetry to rapping was a natural progression, as he saw poetry as being viewed negatively, which led him to turn it into music to gain more attention (Bonita, 2017). He later co-starred in the 1993 film *Poetic Justice* alongside Janet Jackson, who is the sister of Michael Jackson. The film explored the lives of young African Americans and touched upon themes of violence, trauma; it showed the way that one can find solace by composing poetry (poetic\_robort, n.d.). The education Tupac received at the school fostered his appreciation for the arts and social justice, which differed with the street culture he later embraced in California (Huntington, 2024).

An important moment in Tupac's career was his relocation to California. It changed him from an aspiring artist to a leading figure in the gangsta rap scene (Huntington, 2024). In 1990, he joined the rap group Digital Underground and was a back-up dancer and roadie (The Vogue, n.d.). Tupac performed on two of their albums in 1991, *This Is an EP Release* and *Sons of the P*, before releasing his solo debut, *2Pacalypse Now*, later that same year (Ray, 2025). This

album was different from the upbeat dance music of Digital Underground, as it incorporated a tone and style similar to groups like Public Enemy and N.W.A. (Ray, 2025). The album featured lyrics that focused on issues such as systemic racism, police brutality, and poverty, many of which have sparked controversy (Huntington, 2024). The track “Trapped” dealt with the ongoing issue of police brutality in Black communities (Davis, 2019). In one of those instances, Amadou Diallo was wrongfully and fatally shot by four NYPD officers on February 4, 1999, as he entered his apartment building (Cesaric, 2024). This led to protests against police brutality toward people of color, with several public figures, including former U.S. Representative Charles Rangel, being arrested for blocking the entrance to the police headquarters (Cesaric, 2024). This is an issue that still persists. Former police officer Aaron Dean was sentenced to almost 12 years in prison for the manslaughter of Atatiana Jefferson, a 28-year-old Black woman, whom he fatally shot in her home in 2019 (BBC News, 2022). In 2022, Black individuals experienced police use of force at a rate 3.2 times higher than that of white individuals (Levin, 2024). Tupac’s album *2Pacalypse Now* did not initially chart well or produce major hits, but it achieved gold certification four years later (The Vogue, n.d.). In 1992, Tupac had “Thug Life” tattooed across his abdomen, using the phrase as an acronym to symbolize the harsh realities of life for marginalized groups (Blain, 2023). His “Thug Life” philosophy underscored the strength and perseverance of oppressed communities (Huntington, 2024). The same year, he released his second album, *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.*, which combined party anthems with messages of social justice, references to violence against rival rappers, and an ongoing love for his mother despite her struggles with addiction (Ogbar, 2017). Tupac’s music continued to address the issues that African Americans were experiencing through songs like “The Streetz R Death Row” and “Last Wordz” (The Vogue, n.d.). Track “Keep Ya Head Up” portrayed law enforcement as a major threat rather than protectors and pointed out the destructive effects of police brutality (Escobar, 2023).

Tupac soon faced legal troubles, including being convicted of sexually assaulting a woman in 1993. After serving eight months, he was bailed out of prison by Marion “Suge” Knight, the CEO of Death Row Records, in exchange for signing a deal to release three albums with the label, with his fifth album, *All Eyez on Me*, being counted as two separate discs (The Vogue, n.d.). Tupac followed Death Row's gangster ethos and rivalries (Ogbar, 2017). *All Eyez on Me* album that was released in 1996 was a celebration of the “thug life” that Tupac embodied (Ray, 2025). The album put emphasis on the themes of hedonism and menace associated with gangsta rap (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023). “California Love” became Tupac’s most

famous song and reached number one on the Billboard Hot 100 (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023). The public's scrutiny of his association with the gangsta lifestyle followed his fame and success. (Ray, 2025). It should be noted that despite his public image at that time, Tupac was involved in charitable efforts. He was funding a youth center, supporting sports teams in South Central Los Angeles and establishing a helpline for young people in need (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023).

On September 7, 1996, Tupac was shot four times in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada (The Vogue, n.d.). Prior to it, he had attended a boxing match (Ray, 2025). In addition, there had been an altercation between Tupac and a member of the Crips gang shortly before the shooting happened (Biography.com Editors & McEvoy, 2023). It is speculated that Tupac's biggest rival, rapper Christopher Wallace, known as Notorious B.I.G, was involved in the murder (Olito & Shaw, 2024). Wallace denied any connection (Olito & Shaw, 2024). Due to respiratory failure and cardiac arrest, Tupac died six days later (The Vogue, n.d.). TIME described his murder as a nightmare that defined the world of gangsta rap, where the violence in the art increasingly became a reality (Rothman, 2016). In September 2023, Duane Davis was arrested in connection with the killing, more than 27 years after Tupac's death (Olito & Shaw, 2024). Tupac's politically charged lyrics were brought up again (Escobar, 2023). Tupac's death is an important turning point in hip-hop that established the violence and divisions within the industry further (Huntington, 2024). Movements like Black Lives Matter continue to be inspired by his music and message even during harsh periods like today (Huntington, 2024). Tupac's lyrics tragically resonate with the deaths of numerous Black Americans at the hands of the police; the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement proves the continued relevance of Tupac's music (Ledwith, 2016).

After Tupac's death in 1996, his mother Afeni founded the Tupac Amaru Shakur Foundation that supports creative arts education for young people and also helped create the Broadway musical *Holler If Ya Hear Me* in 2014, which featured Tupac's music (Eidell, 2024). Tupac was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame posthumously in 2017 (Ray, 2025). Tupac's work has been openly acknowledged by leading industry artists like Eminem and 50 Cent (The Vogue, n.d.). Mark Anthony Neal, a professor at the State University of New York, noted that Tupac's death created a leadership void in hip-hop (The Vogue, n.d.). Similarly, Emmett Price, a music professor at Northeastern University, compared Tupac's public image to trickster figures in African American folklore (The Vogue, n.d.).

Chapter 1 provided an in-depth exploration of the social, political and cultural context of 1990s California. It touched upon Tupac Shakur's background and his poetry in hip-hop that acts as a tool for identity and resistance. This knowledge establishes a framework for analyzing his album *All Eyez on Me*. The criteria for analysis in Chapter 2 will focus on identifying slang terms by recurring themes such as racial inequality and gang violence. Practical analysis will place these within the socio-political realities of both Tupac and the marginalized communities he represented. It will provide the interplay between personal narratives and collective struggles in Tupac's slang.

## CHAPTER 2 THEMATIC AND NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF *ALL EYEZ ON ME*

### 2.1. Methodology and Selection Criteria

This chapter provides thematic and narrative analysis of Tupac Shakur’s linguistic choices. Five tracks were selected from his album *All Eyez on Me* and a qualitative analysis has been chosen for the following five songs: “Ambitionz Az A Ridah”, “2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted”, “Only God Can Judge Me”, “Tradin’ War Stories” and “All Eyez on Me”. These tracks were selected based on their extensive use of regional slang, lyrical connection and thematic relevance to Tupac’s identity. The analysis is founded on sociolinguistic principles. It is influenced by scholars such as Geneva Smitherman (1986), Janet Holmes (2013) and Alim & Smitherman (2012). They emphasize the intersection of language, identity and power in marginalized communities. Digital source *Genius* is used in order to analyse lyrics. Dictionaries are used to help identify the meaning of slang. Introduction to a track is provided, followed by a table that demonstrates five slang terms, which are found in the lyrics and are relevant to the narrative of the song. While many slang terms appear across the selected tracks, this study focuses on a limited amount of terms that are thematically significant and tied to West Coast identity. Detailed track analysis is done after and contains conclusion on the overall themes and narratives of the track. Each track is analysed for both factors: Tupac’s use of slang for the personal narrative of the song and for the broader collective struggles. Slang was analysed for its narrative context within 1990s West Coast hip-hop and for the experiences of Tupac and his community.

### 2.2. Analysis of Tracks

The first track on the album is “Ambitionz Az A Ridah”. It is an important establishment of Tupac’s “Thug Life” philosophy. It touches upon dual themes throughout the album with Tupac being a wanted man and the never-changing law that follows him.

Term	Denotation	Narrative Purpose
Bustas (“Let them other bustas try, at least you tried for it”)	Slang for cowards or “fake” people. Often used to discredit someone as falsely confident (Farlex, 2024).	Used to taunt enemies and assert dominance. Reinforces the contrast between real and “fake”.

Meal Ticket (“I’m on a meal ticket mission, want a mil’ so I’m wishin’”)	Metaphor for success or survival money (Collins COBUILD, 2012). It is often used in hustling contexts.	Tupac uses it to show financial motivation and ambitions.
Ridah (“I won’t deny it, I’m a straight ridah”)	Shares similarities to term “ride or die” that is used to describe a reliable and trustworthy friend (Farlex, 2024). Phonetic slang that refers in street terms about someone being reliable and fearless.	Establishes Tupac’s identity with gang loyalty as someone not to be messed with.
Strapped (“Me, Syke and Bogart are strapped up the same night”)	To arm yourself or someone with a gun (Farlex, 2024). A common gang-related slang.	Used to establish a threat of violence and as a way to protect oneself.
Thug (“My murderous lyrics, equipped with spirits of the thugs before me”)	Violent individual or a criminal (HarperCollins, 2014). Reclaimed term as a symbol of resilience that is used to establish defiance.	A symbol of masculinity and resistance that portrays Tupac’s identity.

In the song, Tupac uses slang to portray a violent tone and “realness”. Self-defence and aggression were needed for survival with lines “So many battlefield scars while driven in plush cars” that provide a contrast between Tupac’s success and his trauma from systemic oppression and violence. Tupac connects his own anger with historical struggle and resistance with the line “My murderous lyrics, equipped with spirits of the thugs before me”. “Let them other bustas try” is an example of using slang to show “realness” and shared principles. It is used to criticize “fake” people who act like cowards.

“Ambitionz Az A Ridah” is a track that provides the connection between resistance, masculinity and criminal activity. Tupac shows his deep personal connection to a community that is often spoken about in a harsh way by discussing “Thug Life”. He uses slang that appeared from

social segregation and makes it a symbol of identity that goes against mainstream narratives and gives a voice to marginalized communities.

In conclusion, “Ambitionz Az A Ridah” acts as an aggressive statement of independence. Themes of loyalty, violence and resistance that are portrayed through Tupac’s slang show an important part of his outlaw nature. It is vital to his message, identity and politics.

“2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted” is a collaboration between both artists that at the time went through legal problems. Tupac Shakur was found guilty for assault and Snoop Dogg was charged with a murder. The title of the track refers to them being outlaws and having an extensive negative state and media coverage. The track criticizes law enforcement and admires outlaw identity that is presented by both artists.

Term	Denotation	Narrative Purpose
Amerikaz Most Wanted (“Another warrant, 2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted”)	Reference to the FBI show. Establishes being a public enemy or constantly being on media.	Shows in a joking manner how Tupac and Snoop Dogg are criminalized by the public eye.
Blood / Cuh (“It’s like, Cuh, Blood, gang-bangin”)	Bloods and Crips. “Cuh” is Crip lingo (Peovska, 2019).	Mention of LA gang culture for authenticity.
G (“I never stop bailin’ these motherfuckin’ G’s”)	“Gangsta” or “Original Gangsta”. Title of status and respect in the streets as a member of a gang (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).	In the rap game and gang life it acts as a sign of credibility and seniority.
Homie (“With the S-N, double-O-P, Dogg, my fuckin’ homie”)	Homeboy or homegirl (American Heritage, 2011). Close friend from a neighborhood or crew.	Used to emphasize loyalty and deep connection.

Gang-bangin' ("It's like, Cuh, Blood, gang-bangin'")	Gang activity involvement or a fight (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010).	Mentioned side by side in line "It's like, Cuh, Blood, gang-bangin'" to describe the belief in unity of both gangs.
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Both Tupac and Snoop Dogg represent West Coast connection and establish solidarity between each other that is expressed through slang. Tupac continues to reject the idea of conforming to mainstream expectations and does not want to be subjugated. The chorus offers a different perspective of being "wanted". With repeating lines "Ain't nothin' but a gangsta party", it may suggest that being criminalized is an expected outcome for any outspoken Black people. Slang like "Bailin'" and "G" show the connection between legal and street realities.

Like "Ambitionz Az A Ridah", this track is a showcase of Tupac's defiance against the law with his use of slang. Both Tupac and Snoop Dogg banter and share slang with a call-and-response rhythm that allows for a back-and-forth lyrical conversation. "It's like, Cuh, Blood, gang-bangin'" is a line that mentions gang unity even between two warring gangs. All of these points show communal identity and allow the language to avoid isolation and create resistance.

In conclusion, "2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted" is important as both a performance and a political statement. Tupac and Snoop Dogg establish a track about cultural resistance and solidarity with each other. Their language is used to express the narrative around criminalization and justice.

"Only God Can Judge Me" is a track that is written like a spiritual guide. The lyrics show Tupac's paranoia and frustration with the justice system. His lyrics express tension between defiance and vulnerability with a desire for redemption. Through this lens, Tupac presents "Thug Life" as having a deeper moral meaning. The track explores the complex themes of life and death in addition to divine judgment. Artist Rappin' 4-Tay is featured on the track with a heavy use of slang to describe his own struggles and the judgements that he will face.

Term	Denotation	Narrative Purpose
Judge me ("Only God can judge me")	Form an opinion about someone (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).	Shifts authority from the justice system and judging individuals to God.

Buckin' ("Would you be wrong for buckin' a nigga to the pavement?")	Slang for retaliating or going against someone in order for that individual to take responsibility (American Heritage, 2011).	Used to question morality for violence.
Fade ("Tellin' them niggas, "You can fade him"")	Fight or beat up someone.	Implies willingness to fight.
Fetti ("My new shit is so fetti, already sold a ki or ounce")	Slang for money (Farlex, 2015).	Shows material success.
Playa-hatin' mark ("For instance, say a playa-hatin' mark is out to kill ya")	Someone who despises successful people (Farlex, 2015). Envious critic who is a weak or a gullible person.	Used to point out threats by jealous people.

The repetition of "Only God can judge me" in the chorus shifts the judgement responsibility away from courts and the news to something spiritual. Tupac's street talk turns into a way of talking about being saved, especially with Tupac's legal troubles. Tupac admits that he is not innocent. He argues that it's the result of how the world treated him. Lines "I hear the doctor standin' over me, screamin' I can make it" and "Got a body full of bullet holes, layin' here naked" reveal a painful and compassionate side.

Tupac uses slang in this track to tell stories that are both emotional and spiritual. He is vulnerable but also stands firm. He uses words as a way to survive, not just to appear brave. When Tupac states that God will judge him more than the legal system, he critiques the criminal justice system that does not recognize his human nature. He uses the slang to show who he really is and his identity as not a villain, but as a person with flaws who thinks and feels.

In conclusion, "Only God Can Judge Me" is a track where Tupac uses the role of slang to resist, process trauma, question justice and heal with spiritual means through the lens of someone who has experienced unfair treatment.

"Tradin' War Stories" is a track that brings together Tupac and the members of hip-hop group Outlawz. They share how they grew up in environments, where violence and poverty were being neglected by the system. The title of the track is a metaphor for trauma-sharing that links together personal struggles and battle scars. West Coast slang in this song acts as a way to bring all the memories together and to express feelings. The track provides the feeling of connection with unity through shared language.

Term	Denotation	Narrative Purpose
'Gnac ("Every one of my niggas strapped sippin' on 'Gnac")	Cognac. An alcoholic drink. Grape brandy (Collins, 2005).	Proof of a lifestyle. Acts as a part of the "thug" connection.
Outlawz ("We tradin' war stories, we Outlawz on the rise")	Tupac's hip-hop crew name.	Collective identification as outsiders and law breaking individuals.
Turned out ("Learned the know how, well how to do now, by 18 turned out")	Becoming deeply involved in street life or crime.	Transition from innocence to experience at a young age.
War stories ("We tradin' war stories, we Outlawz on the rise")	Term that acts as a metaphor for recounting street fights, trauma or survival experiences.	Establishes unity and a shared past. Treats street life as a battlefield.
Mobbing ("Plus, stompin' steel toed, killin' up ho's and keep mobbin' G")	Cruising in a group or a gang to look for confrontation or to establish power through violence (Collins Dictionary, n.d.).	Unity through a group movement.

The slang in this track acts as a language bond that lets everyone talk about pain while keeping their pride. This allows the track to feel like a healing discussion in a rap form. The mood is more somber with the lyrics showing vulnerability, as the verses go through everyone like war stories that are being passed between soldiers.

To understand the systemic violence around them, Tupac and the featured artists in “Tradin’ War Stories” build their collective narrative. By telling their stories in their own language, artists also showed pride. The collective voices of different individuals throughout the track highlight that Tupac's struggles were shared by many young Black men in 90s California. Their common slang usage is a reminder of refusal to be forgotten or silenced.

In conclusion, “Tradin’ War Stories” acts as a way to show the unity that community can bring together through storytelling and through a slang that others might not fully understand. Tupac and the artists that he works with create a safe space to express their memories and share their experiences.

“All Eyez on Me” track is a focal point of the album. Tupac ponders about the meaning of being seen, but not being understood or trusted. It is a track that represents what Tupac’s life is after prison. He does not feel safe with being constantly on the watch, but finds relief through his gained freedom. He continues to show themes of rebellion against the legal system and media.

Term	Denotation	Narrative Purpose
All eyes on me (“All eyes on me, but I'm knowin’”)	Reference to being under constant surveillance from media and federal agents.	Shows the constant surveillance and suspicion of successful Black people.
Gettin’ high (“Live the life of a boss player ’cause even gettin’ high”)	Use of drugs to elevate mood (McGraw-Hill, 2002). Acts as a metaphor for escaping reality or pressure.	Suggests coping mechanism for stress and pain.
Playa (“Live my life as a boss playa, ’cause even gettin’ high”)	An individual who navigates both street and social life with charm. Engages in illicit activities (Random House Kernerman, 2010).	Reinforces image of self-control and dominance despite adversity.

The game (“The game sharper than a motherfuckin’ razor blade”)	Slang for the hustle through involvement in hidden or illegal activities (Cambridge University Press, n.d.).	Suggests pursuit of wealth in dangerous environments that pose risks.
First and fifteenth (“Depend on me like the first and fifteenth”)	Welfare cheque payment during first and fifteenth days in a month (Green, n.d.)	Used as a metaphor for trust. Tupac says he’s as reliable as money paychecks.

Tupac’s exhaustion is shown in the boastful nature of the track. He presents himself as someone who is fearless. Despite that, there is a sense of entrapment with having freedom through toughness. “All Eyez on Me” embodies Tupac’s inner and outer conflict as the lyrics appear confrontational, while expressing honesty with lines “I told the judge I was raised wrong”.

In conclusion, “All Eyez on Me” is a track that talks about strength in the form of resistance and as a way to claim power in a hostile environment. Tupac turns the constant gaze of media and federal agents into something that gives him more power and influence, while continuing to show his weak side.

### 2.3. Establishment of Findings and Narrative Themes

This chapter has explored the themes and narratives of Tupac Shakur’s *All Eyez on Me* through the West Coast slang and narrative cohesion. Five tracks were analyzed: “Ambitionz Az A Ridah”, “2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted”, “Only God Can Judge Me”, “Tradin’ War Stories” and “All Eyez on Me”. Terms like “gangsta” and “G” establish street credibility. In addition, they show the importance of loyalty and respect within the community. “Homie” reinforces community bonds and solidarity. The term emphasizes the collective support system that is vital in Tupac’s social environment. In comparison, the term “busta” is used to criticize individuals who lack authenticity or betray group values. This allows to differentiate between those who are true to the community and those who are not. Slang term “playa” expresses a desire for success. It shows both the appeal and the difficulties of seeking status within a marginalized community. The term “outlaw” establishes Tupac’s perspective that is shaped by both pride and obstacles. It reflects his embrace of a rebellious identity that was shaped by his surroundings. In addition, “outlaw” indicates the struggles of being outside the law system and under constant threat of violence. Collectively, these slang terms are powerful narrative tools.

They communicate Tupac's experiences and the broader context of his community and environment.

It becomes clear that Tupac's slang is functional and conveys themes of solidarity, defiance, and emotional complexity. Tupac uses slang as a protection of his values and to provide resilience to systemic discrimination. His use of slang connects personal trauma with collective struggle on the album with tracks that provide different layers of meaning. Tupac's narrative is based around a distinct social area with the use of specific slang and references. Slang in *All Eyez On Me* is connected with both Tupac's own experiences and the stories of others.

## CONCLUSION

The thesis demonstrates that Tupac's linguistic choices are not merely stylistic. A qualitative analysis of selected tracks has shown that the West Coast slang can be used as a means of authentic self-expression and cultural commentary. The findings highlight that West Coast slang in Tupac's lyrics takes on multiple roles. It reinforces group identity and resistance against systemic oppression. In addition, it provides personal insight into the realities of urban life in 1990s California. This resonates with ethnomusicological perspectives that perceive music as a form of cultural knowledge; Tupac's songs function not only as entertainment, but as cultural historic narratives. As Herndon and McLeod (1982) emphasize, music can be both a product and producer of culture. Tupac covers themes of struggle and resistance. He creates a distinct identity in his lyrics that resonates with marginalized communities.

The five selected tracks from the album *All Eyez on Me* were "Ambitionz Az A Ridah", "2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted", "Only God Can Judge Me", "Tradin' War Stories", and "All Eyez on Me". Through qualitative analysis of selected tracks, it is assessed that Tupac's slang choices are intertwined with themes such as gang violence, racial tensions and economic disparity. The analysis demonstrates a consistent use of slang that acts as a relay of Tupac's internal conflicts. In addition, the slang used by Tupac represents the broader realities of the communities he was a part of. His narratives connect individual struggle and collective experience. This makes his music personally resonant and socially significant. This reflects the sociolinguistic principle that language not only communicates meaning but also constructs social belonging (Holmes, 2013; Smitherman, 1986).

Terms like "ridah", "thug" and "homie" have emotional and cultural weight. They express loyalty, defiance, trauma. In addition, they convey perseverance in a society where mainstream narratives often chastise voices like Tupac's. The use of West Coast slang contributes significantly to the album's overall coherence. It creates a sense of authenticity that allows for a personal engagement and connection with his experiences.

The thesis showcases the importance of language and particularly slang in shaping narratives and creating cultural identities in music. Tupac's album *All Eyez on Me* can be interpreted as a socio-political statement that is provided through various expressions of West Coast slang. Through the collective frameworks of sociolinguistics and ethnomusicology, Tupac's use of West Coast slang functions as a way to coalesce individual expression with collective history, emphasizing the themes and narratives that make *All Eyez on Me* an important cultural work.

## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Tupac Shakur on mõjukas hip-hop artist, kes kasvas üles vaesuse, rassilise ebaõigluse ja vägivalla keskel Ameerika Ühendriikides. Lõputöö pealkiri on “Temaatiline ja narratiivne seos läbi West Coast slängi Tupac Shakuri albumil *All Eyez On Me*”. Töö keskendub Tupac Shakuri 1996. aasta topeltalbumil *All Eyez on Me* kasutatud Lääneranniku slängile ning sellele, kuidas see toimib narratiivse vahendina nii isiklike kui ka laiemate sotsiaal-poliitiliste sõnumite edastamisel.

Töö peamine eesmärk on uurida, kuidas Tupaci slängikasutus lisab tema muusikale temaatilist sügavust ning kuidas see peegeldab 1990. aastate California sotsiaal-poliitilist olukorda. Samuti analüüsitakse tema keelelisi valikuid, et mõista, kuidas need väljendavad nii isiklikku identiteeti kui ka kollektiivset vastupanu. Kuigi Tupaci mõju muusikas ja aktivismis on laialdaselt tunnustatud, seisneb uurimisprobleem selles, kuidas spetsiifiliselt lokaliseeritud Lääneranniku släng toimib tema laulusõnades identiteedi, kogukonna ja vastupanu keeruliste teemade edasiandmisel ja ühendamisel. Töö hüpoteesiks on, et Tupaci Lääneranniku slängi kasutus albumil *All Eyez on Me* ei ole pelgalt stiililine, vaid toimib olulise narratiivse mehhanismina, mis ühendab tema isikliku loo 1990. aastate linnalise California laiemate sotsiaalsete ja poliitiliste kogemustega. Analüüs tugineb sotsiolingvistilisele raamistikule, mida on kujundanud sotsiolingvistid nagu Geneva Smitherman (1986), Janet Holmes (2013) ja Samy Alim (2012), kes rõhutavad keele rolli identiteedi ja võimu väljendamisel marginaliseeritud gruppides. Aluseks võetakse Aafrika-Ameerika rahvakeele (AAVE) mõiste, eriti selle roll kultuurilise väljenduse ja vastupanuna.

Töö koosneb sissejuhatusest, kahest põhipeatükist ja kokkuvõttest. Sissejuhatus annab ülevaate hip-hop kultuuri sotsiolingvistilisest tähendusest ja slängi rollist kultuurilise identiteedi väljendamisel. I peatükk “West Coast slängi kontekstuaalne kehtestamine ja Tupac Shakuri narratiiv” käsitleb 1990. aastate California sotsiaalset olukorda ning Shakuri eluloolisi mõjutusi, mis kujundasid tema keelekasutust. II peatükk “Albumi *All Eyez on Me* temaatiline ja narratiivne analüüs” sisaldab kvalitatiivset analüüsi viiest valitud laulust: “Ambitionz Az A Ridah”, “2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted”, “Only God Can Judge Me”, “Tradin’ War Stories” ja “All Eyez on Me”. Iga lugu analüüsitakse kasutatud slängiterminite ja narratiivse sidususe kaudu. Slängiterminid kategoriseeritakse ja tõlgendatakse nende tähenduse põhjal laulutekstis ning seotakse Tupaci narratiivse lähenemisega: kuidas ta jutustab lugusid, loob identiteeti või

väljendab vastupanu. Slängi analüüsitakse selle narratiivse funktsiooni, mitte ainult otsese tähenduse kaudu.

Slängterminid nagu “gangsta” ja “G” aitavad luua usaldusväärsust ning rõhutavad lojaalsuse ja austuse olulisust kogukonnas. “Homie” tugevdab kogukonna sidet ja sümboliseerib tugisüsteemi, mis on sotsiaalselt marginaliseeritud keskkondades eluliselt tähtis. Seevastu „busta” tähistab inimest, kes pole autentne või kes on reetnud kogukonna väärtused. See võimaldab meil eristada tõelisi liikmeid neist, kes vaid teesklevad. “Playa” väljendab edupüüdlust, mis on nii ihaldusväärne kui ka staatuse saavutamiseks raske. Mõiste “outlaw” kehastab Tupaci maailmavaadet. See on uhkuse ja väljakutse põimumine, mis peegeldab tema mässumeelset identiteeti. See viitab ka raskustele eksisteerida väljaspool õigussüsteemi ja pidevale vägivallaohule. Need slängiväljendid toimivad nii poeetiliste kui ka sotsiaal-kriitiliste narratiivsete vahenditena. Need võimaldavad kuulajal suhestuda nii Tupaci isiklike narratiivide kui ka laiemaga ühiskondliku kontekstiga.

Kokkuvõttes järeldatakse, et Tupac Shakuri kasutatav Lääneranniku släng on sisuline vahend, mille kaudu ta edastab nii oma isiklike kui ka kollektiivseid kogemusi. Släng mõjub sotsiaalse vastupanu keelelise vormina ja aitab luua kuulajaga emotsionaalset sidet. Analüüs näitab, et sellise slängikasutuse kaudu on võimalik mõista, kuidas muusika võib peegeldada ning samas kujundada ühiskondlikku identiteeti ja kultuurimälu.

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